

## American Art and Literature

**Objective:** Analyze the impact of social reforms on Americans during the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

**Enduring Understanding:** Investigate the changes in art, philosophy, and literature in America the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

**Materials:**

- Quotes by Henry David Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson- enough for a class of 30 (or 15 doubled up)
- Copies of “The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere” by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and question sheet
- Audio recording & sheet of “The Tell-Tale Heart” by Edgar Allan Poe
- Copies of “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow” to read as a class (or as homework)
- Disney’s version of “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow”

**Quickwrite:** Draw a quick picture or write a paragraph reflecting American culture in the 2000s.

- 1) Ask students to describe what they would write about or what they would paint to create a work that people would recognize as “American.” Ask students to see how many of the following categories they can match with the name of an American artist: painter, novelist, poet, playwright, and composer. Invite students to share anything they know about the artists they name.
- 2) Describe American painters and their works of the 1800s. Tell students that before 1800, most American painters studied in Europe and some were painters of important people like kings and presidents. Show the works of Benjamin West, Charles Willson Peale, and Gilbert Stuart. Explain the formation of the Hudson River School where Thomas Cole and Asher B. Durand painted American landscapes. If possible, find and show the works of George Caleb Bingham who painted frontier life and John James Audubon who painted birds and wild creatures of America.
- 3) Define “transcendentalism” and “individualism”. Explain that in New England, there were a few writers who were somewhat influential based on their belief that important truths transcended human reason and that the individual was important. Show students pictures of the Old Manse which was owned by the Emerson family and where Nathaniel Hawthorne also lived for a time. Describe the works of Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau. These writers were not afraid to speak out against what they

believed to be wrong. Read just a little from Thoreau's "Civil Disobedience" and how he was an example of this philosophy.

- 4) Give each student a quote from either Henry David Thoreau or Ralph Waldo Emerson. Tell them to use their appointment clock to meet with their 3:00 partner. They will tell their partner what the quote is and discuss the meaning/importance of the quote. After 2 minutes, students will move to their 7:00 partner and repeat the process. Two minutes later, they will go to their 11:00 partner and repeat the process. Bring the class back together and have volunteers share what they learned or examples of what they talked about.
- 5) Discuss the poets of this time including Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and his poem "The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere". Give students a copy of this poem and have work in groups to create a list of the inaccuracies of the poem with the actual event. They can create it in a chart form of their choice. If time, introduce students to the works of John Greenleaf Whittier as well as Walt Whitman.
- 6) Mention a few of the authors who made an impact at this time. Describe James Fenimore Cooper, Washington Irving, Herman Melville, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and William Wells Brown as well as women writers like Catherine Sedgwick and Fanny Fern. Give a little detail into Edgar Allan Poe's life and his bipolar disorder. Explain how this disorder appeared in many of his works. Have students listen to an audio recording of "The Tell-Tale Heart" and tell them to look for evidence of his disorder in this story.
- 7) Focus also on Washington Irving's "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow". He is also the author of "Rip Van Winkle". If time allows (or as homework), have students read the actual story. After discussion, show students the video of Disney's version of "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" and have students share their thoughts on how true the cartoon stayed to the story.
- 8) EXIT SLIP: Students will choose one of the people we discussed and how they were able to show their American roots through their work.

**\*\*THIS WILL TAKE 2-3 DAYS\*\***